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ACTION INR-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOTE-00
	WHA-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	NSAE-00	OIG-03	PA-00	PRS-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TEST-00	USIE-00	R-00
	IIP-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	SAS-00	/006W		
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R 311406Z DEC 02  
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0022  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT OF SPAIN 002668

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: KPAO, OPRC, PA, TD, ASEC  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: "V'ZUELA CRISIS HAS  
SUPERPOWER IN A BIND"

THE LIBERAL EXPRESS NEWSPAPER OF TUESDAY,  
DECEMBER 24, 2002, CARRIED AN ARTICLE ENTITLED  
"V'ZUELA CRISIS HAS SUPERPOWER IN A BIND", BY  
FRIDA GHITIS AUTHOR OF "THE END OF REVOLUTION: A  
CHANGING WORLD IN THE AGE OF LIVE TELEVISION",  
COURTESY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES.  
EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

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"THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS STRAINING TO FIND THE  
RIGHT TONE IN ITS APPROACH TO THE GROWING CRISIS  
IN VENEZUELA. ONE DAY WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN ARI  
FLEISCHER SAYS THE UNITED STATES WOULD LIKE TO  
SEE NEW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS; THE NEXT DAY,  
IT'S A REFERENDUM.

WHATEVER IT IS, FLEISCHER EMPHASIZES THAT IT  
OUGHT TO HAPPEN DEMOCRATICALLY, WITHIN 'THE  
CONFINES OF THE CONSTITUTION OF VENEZUELA'.

HOWEVER, AT A TIME WHEN WASHINGTON CAN LEAST  
AFFORD TO SEE OIL PRODUCTION DISRUPTED, FEW

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS  
DATE/CASE ID: 25 APR 2005 200400109

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PEOPLE IN LATIN AMERICA BELIEVE THE U.S. CLAIM THAT IT STANDS FOR DEMOCRATIC RULE. WASHINGTON'S INFLUENCE IN VENEZUELA'S CRISIS HAS BEEN DEEPLY ERODED BY ITS OWN ACTIONS."

".FROM WASHINGTON'S PERSPECTIVE, THE TIMING OF THE TROUBLES IN CARACAS COULD HARDLY BE WORSE. VENEZUELAN ARE PASSIONATELY DIVIDED; THOUGH MILLIONS OF CHAVEZ'S OPPONENTS WANT HIM OUT OF OFFICE, MILLIONS OF HIS SUPPORTERS - MANY OF THEM ARMED CIVILIANS - SAY THEY WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES TO KEEP HIM IN POWER. THE INGREDIENTS FOR A DISASTROUS CIVIL WAR ARE IN PLACE.

THE UNITED STATES WOULD LIKE TO DEFUSE THE SITUATION, BUT IT IS REAPING WHAT IS SOWED IN APRIL, WHEN WASHINGTON SPECTACULARLY MISHANDLED

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THE VENEZUELAN CRISIS. IT PROCLAIMED SUPPORT FOR THE OVERTHROW OF THE CONTROVERSIAL, BUT NONETHELESS DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED, CHAVEZ."

".WASHINGTON, HOWEVER, RUSHED TO CELEBRATE, BLAMED CHAVEZ FOR HIS OWN FATE AND ACCEPTED THE COUP PLOTTERS' FALSE ASSERTION THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD RESIGNED.

MANY IN THE REGION ACCUSED WASHINGTON OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE COUP. ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS OFFERED CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS OF MEETINGS WITH THE LEADERS OF THE ANTI-CHAVEZ MOVEMENT. SOME SAID U.S. AUTHORITIES HAD OFFERED TACIT SUPPORT FOR THE FORCEFUL REMOVAL OF THE PRESIDENT; OTHERS MAINTAINED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD URGED THE OPPOSITION TO WORK THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS.

THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE OVERJOYED IF CHAVEZ LEFT OFFICE. THE FORMER PARATROOPER HAS BEEN A BURR UNDER WASHINGTON'S SADDLE. THE NATION THAT WAS ONCE A RELIABLE AND FRIENDLY SUPPLIER OF OIL HAS BECOME A SOURCE OF CONSTANT WORRY SINCE CHAVEZ TOOK OFFICE FOUR YEARS AGO.

HIS INFLAMMATORY LEFTIST RHETORIC HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY ANTI-AMERICAN. HE ACCUSED THE UNITED STATES, IN ATTACKING THE TALIBAN, OF COMMITTING A CRIME AS GREAT AS THAT OF SEPTEMBER

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11. HE HAS SUCCESSFULLY PUSHED FOR OPEC TO  
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CONTROL PRODUCTION AND THUS PUSH OIL PRICES  
HIGHER.

TO RALLY OPEC UNITY HE HAS VISITED MOAMMAR  
GADHAFI IN LIBYA, SADDAM HUSSEIN IN IRAQ, THE  
AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI IN IRAN AND FIDEL CASTRO -  
HIS CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND IN CUBA."

".IRONICALLY, EVENTS IN VENEZUELA MAY HAVE MORE  
POWER TO INFLUENCE WASHINGTON'S ACTIONS THAN VICE  
VERSA.

IF THE TWO-WEEK ANTI-CHAVEZ STRIKE THAT HAS  
CRIPPLED VENEZUELA'S OIL PRODUCTION DOES NOT END  
SOON, WASHINGTON WILL FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO  
LAUNCH A WAR IN IRAQ.

AFTER MARCHING OUT OF STEP WITH THE REST OF THE  
HEMISPHERE IN APRIL, WASHINGTON IS NOW OFFERING  
ITS SUPPORT TO THE MEDIATION EFFORTS OF THE  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES AND HOPING FOR  
THE SAKE OF ITS OIL SUPPLY AND ITS IRAQ PLANS  
THAT THESE EFFORTS WILL SUCCEED. THE LESSON ONCE

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: "V'ZUELA CRISIS HAS  
SUPERPOWER IN A BIND"

AGAIN IS THAT THE GREAT SUPERPOWER IS NOT ALL-  
POWERFUL.

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